

138
THREE

SHORT

DISCOURSES

ON

THE MANNER OF CHRIST'S TEACHING,
THE FEAR OF GOD,
AND CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

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ABRIDGED FROM
LELAND, ROGERS, AND AMORY.

BY A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

WITH A SET OF
MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS,

TAKEN CHIEFLY FROM THE LITURGY.

Acquaint thyself with God, and be at Peace .Job xxii. 21.

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THIRTE

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THE TEAR OF GOD

AND CHRISTIAN CONVICTION

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(J. LELAND, D. D.)

JOHN, vii. 46.

Never Man spake like this Man.

THIS extraordinary Declaration was made by the Officers, whom the Pharisees and chief Priests had sent for the Purpose of apprehending Jesus. The Evangelist informs us (in this Chapter) *that many of the People believed on him ; and began to say, When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than this Man hath done ? upon which the Pharisees and chief Rulers sent Officers, to take him.* These Persons, we have Reason to believe, went with a full Design to execute the Orders given them. But, whilst they hearkened to his Discourse, (probably with an Intention to catch at something, which might afford them a Pretence for seizing him), they themselves were captivated, and intirely disarmed of their Resolution. They found themselves incapable of offering Violence to so excellent a Person, as they were convinced he was. And at their Return, *when the chief Priests and Pharisees inquired why they had not brought him, they answered, " Never Man spake like this Man."*

There are many other Passages in the Writings of the Evangelists, which serve to show, that, notwithstanding the extreme Prejudice, which the Jews conceived against our blessed Saviour, on Account of the humble Style, in which he appeared, they could not forbear admiring him as a Teacher. We are told, *that they were astonished at his Doctrine, and remarked, that he taught as one, who had Authority, and not as the Scribes;—that, when he taught in their Synagogues, he was glorified of all; and that all wondered at the gracious Words, that proceeded out of his Mouth.*

From the Account given of him by those, who were with him during his Ministry, it appears that he taught with inimitable Dignity, and at the same Time with the greatest Plainness and Simplicity:—that he was diligent and unwearied in the Work of teaching; and embraced every Opportunity of inculcating useful Instruction;—that his Manner of speaking was familiar clear and comprehensive;—that he taught with a noble Impartiality and courageous Freedom, and yet with the greatest Prudence and Discretion: choosing the properest Seasons for instilling his divine Lessons;

and frequently making Use of *Parables*: whereby he conveyed the most important Instructions and Admonitions in the most lively, agreeable, and advantageous Manner.

The Things, which Jesus taught, were of the highest Importance!—promotive of the Glory of God; and essentially conducive to the Good of Mankind. The uniform Tendency of all his Instructions was “to make Men good and happy.” His Aim was “to purify the Heart.” Never did he descend to trivial Disputes, nor express a Zeal for unimportant Ceremonies and Observances. He entertained not his Hearers with curious Speculations and nice Distinctions, nor with the Deceits of vain Philosophy. In his Discourses all is great and wise and good: most admirably tending to the greatest practical Usefulness. He came to instruct Men in the Nature of true Religion;—to recover them from their gross Misapprehensions of the Character of the Deity, and of the Worship and Service, which He requires. Throughout the Course of his Ministry he had this Point constantly in View, to guard Men against the dangerous Delusion of “making Religion” “to consist chiefly in outward Forms of Wor-

“ship ; or resting their Hopes on the Ob-
 “vance of such Things, as are in no Way
 “connected with the Improvement of the
 “Heart.” Though he was far from encourag-
 ing Men to disregard any Institution, that was
 duly authorised, he took every Opportunity
 of admonishing them “not to depend on any
 “Thing, but inward Piety and substantial
 “Virtue.”

He hath taught us to form the worthiest
 Notions of the almighty Father. What he
 hath told us of Him, is calculated to impress
 our Minds with a strong Sense of the watchful
 Care of Divine Providence: * as extending
 even to the most inconsiderable Creatures; and
 much more to the rational and nobler Part of
 His Creation. He hath made known the
 tender Mercy of our God towards His offend-
 ing Creatures. *He was sent, as he himself de-
 clared, to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel :
 —to seek and to save that, which was lost. He
 came to call Sinners to Repentance ; and to turn
 the Hearts of the disobedient to the Wisdom of the
 just.* He describes the Almighty as abound-
 ing in Mercy to the humble Penitent ; but at

* Luke, xii. 6. 7.

the same Time, most terrible in Judgment to wilful and obstinate Offenders. Nothing could be more compassionately kind and tender than his Invitation to afflicted Sinners. *Come unto me, all ye, that labour, and are heavy-laden; and I will give you Rest.*

Agreeably to that most engaging Representation, which he hath given us of the Deity, he summeth up the Duty, we owe to Him, in Love. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great Commandment.* He then adds, *And the next is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy-self."*

—He assureth us that the only effectual Way of pleasing God is "to abound in the Fruits of Righteousness and Goodness to our Fellow-creatures." * *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit. So shall ye be my Disciples.* He not only forbids every Act of Injustice Violence and Oppression, but requireth us, *as much as possible, to live peaceably with all Men.*

He chargeth us to forbear censuring and condemning others, *lest we ourselves be judged with the same Severity.* And, whereas

* John, xv. 8.

some are wont to flatter themselves, that by a diligent Observance of the outward Acts of Piety and Devotion they may compensate for the various unjust and cruel Practices they are guilty of, he gives them to understand *that they must first be reconciled to their offended Brother*, (that is, "make Reparation for whatever Injury they have done to him.") *before the Offerings, whereby they would honour God, can be accepted.* Moreover he teacheth us, not merely to abstain from *injuring* others, but to endeavour, by every Means in our Power, to promote the Happiness of our Fellow-creatures. He requireth us to *love our Neighbour as ourselves*: that is "not only to forbear doing him any Injury, but to be sincerely desirous of his Welfare."—To illustrate this Duty, our Saviour hath given us a most excellent and comprehensive Rule: *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*"

With what engaging and powerful Arguments doth he inculcate the Forgiveness of Injuries! Ye have heard that it hath been said, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy.* But I say unto you, *Love your Enemies; bless them, that curse you; do Good to them, that*

hate you: and pray for them, which despitefully use you, and persecute you: "that ye may be the Children of your Father, which is in Heaven." For he maketh His Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth Rain on the just and on the unjust.—If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive your Trespases. But, if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.—And, in the Conclusion of the Parable of the wicked Servant, after describing the severe Sentence, which his Lord passed upon him, he addeth, So likewise shall my heavenly Father do to you, if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases. He directeth us to begin the Work of Duty by regulating the inward Affections. For, accordingly as the Heart stands disposed, so the outward Actions and the main Part of our Conduct in Life will be determined. He requireth us to restrain our Appetites and Desires. He directs us to limit ourselves even in lawful Gratifications: that we may retain a proper Command over ourselves, and not be enslaved by any Habit of Indulgence or Self-will. He repeatedly warneth us against the Love of Riches; and exhorteth us to lay up for ourselves

Treasures in Heaven: where alone we may expect solid and lasting Happiness. Far from dreading the Evils and Distresses, to which a firm Adherence to Religion may expose them in this Life, the Disciples of Christ are encouraged to rejoice and be exceeding glad, when they are persecuted for Righteousness' Sake: because great is their Reward in Heaven.

He earnestly cautioneth us against seeking the Praise of Men for our good Actions. At the same Time that he urgeth us to aspire to the highest Degree of Purity and Goodness, he strictly requires us to disclaim all lofty Thoughts of ourselves, all vain-glorious Confidence and Boasting, of our own Righteousness. Never was the amiable and extensive Virtue of Humility so powerfully recommended and enforced, as by our Saviour Jesus Christ:— whose Example eminently illustrated, what his Precepts (in this Instance above all others) most pointedly held forth.

Upon the whole it may be truly said, that he hath set before us a most beautiful harmonious System of practical Religion. As he hath given us the most admirable Instructions for

the Performance of every Part of our Duty, so he hath brought to our View the most engaging Motives, that can be offered to the Mind of Man. — He endeavoureth to draw us *with the Chords of Love* : — by all the Charms of infinite and everlasting Goodness.

The Gospel of Christ is most justly called *Tidings of great Joy*. And the “gracious Purposes of God, therein revealed” lay us under the strongest Obligation to pay a ready and willing Obedience to all his Laws. This heavenly Messenger hath pronounced the Pardon of our Sins, if we unfeignedly repent, and amend our Lives. *He hath brought a glorious Immortality to Light* ; and hath promised *eternal Life* to all, who sincerely obey the Truth, and persist in serving God “faithfully, though imperfectly.” And he hath assured us, that our heavenly Father is ready to afford all necessary Help and Support to our Weakness, if we pray to Him with an honest and upright Disposition.*

Lastly, he hath acquainted us, that he himself will judge the World in his Father’s Name;

* Luke xi. 13. — Hebrews iv. 16. James i. 6.

—that he will then appoint to the wicked their just Recompence; and that an inconceivably great and glorious Reward shall be conferred upon the righteous: who shall thenceforth enjoy the blissful Presence of the God of Heaven, and be made *Partakers of the everlasting Honour and Happiness of Christ himself.**

It is manifest, from the View now taken of our Saviour's Instructions, that they relate to those Things, in which our Happiness is most intimately concerned. And it is an unspeakable Advantage, that both the Doctrines and Precepts of the Gospel stand upon the infallible Authority of a Teacher sent from God.

The Application to be made is plain and momentous.—If we reject without a fair and thorough Examination, this Gospel, which lays Claim to the highest Authority, (a Claim which hath stood the Test of the closest Inspection both of Friends and Enemies: which never shrinks from the Light, but willingly meets the freest and most penetrating Inquiry,) let us beware of encountering the severe Sentence passed on those, who, at the very Time of

* Romans, viii. 17.

Christ's Preaching, rejected the Words of everlasting Life, and made a Scorn of the Salvation offered to them. "*This is their Condemnation, (saith our Saviour) that Light is come into the World, and they have loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil.*"

Let all, who believe that Jesus spoke the Truth, be very careful "not to hold the Truth in *Unrighteousness.*" Let us not content ourselves with a mere outward Profession; a Belief that is *unfruitful*; or a partial Obedience; ("*sacrificing to God those Things, which cost us nothing*; and reserving to ourselves every *Desire of our corrupted Hearts;*") but resolutely proceed in an uniform Course of Piety and Virtue: aspiring to higher and higher Degrees of Perfection.—Let us manifest our Gratitude to the Father of Mercies, and God of all Comfort, by paying a due Regard to the heavenly Instructions of His Messiah: who **came* (as the Prophet saith) *with Healing in his Wings.* And let us obey from the Heart that Form of Doctrine, which Christ hath delivered to us.

* Malachi, iv. 2.

(J. ROGERS.)

PSALM cxi. 10.

*The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom:
a good Understanding have all they, that do
thereafter: the Praise of it endureth for ever.*

THAT rational Fear of God, which is just-
ly called the Beginning of Wisdom, can
only spring from a right Apprehension of the
supreme Being. It is intirely different from
the slavish dread of an arbitrary and tyrannical
Power. Such a Dread is not indeed a Fear of
God, but of some imaginary Being, placed in
His Stead by our false and injurious Appre-
hensions.

God is a Being of infinite Wisdom and per-
fect Goodness, as well as almighty Power. He
employs His irresistible Might only in execu-
ting the wisest and most beneficent Designs.
The Title and Character most generally applied
to Him by Christ and his Apostles, is *the Fa-
ther*. And the Appellation, by which we are
taught to address Him, is *our heavenly Father*.
If we impute to Him such Qualities, as are in-
consistent with the paternal Character; and
represent Him to ourselves, as delighting not
in the Happiness, but in the Misery and De-

struction of His Creatures; it may be truly said "we know not God," and therefore cannot worship Him as we ought.

The true Fear of God is built upon a Belief that He is indeed most powerful, but at the same Time most just, benevolent, and wise;—that, although He is the almighty uncontrollable Governor of the World, yet His Government is that of an affectionate Father, who directs and commands us only for our Good.

Such Apprehensions as these will naturally inspire humble Reverence and Devotion; chearful Dependence, Gratitude, Love, Hope, and Joy. They will excite in us an earnest Care to avoid transgressing the sacred Laws of such a Being, or (in other Words) an ingenuous Fear of offending Him, who is Goodness itself. As a Son, whilst he reverences the Authority of his Father, and feels a serious Awe of that Resentment, which he would deservedly incur, if he dared wilfully to offend him, yet forgets not that his Parent is concerned, with the tenderest Affection, for his Happiness; that he is the Protector of his Weakness, and the Reliever of his Wants; that he looks on his Failings with Compassion, and reproveth him only from a Principle of sincere Love;—

so, though Religion demands our Reverence of God, as the sovereign Power, from whom we derived our Existence; the Judge of all our Actions, and the Dispenser of all our Happiness; though it represents Him as cloathed with Majesty and Glory *above the Heavens*; the supreme Ruler of the Universe, to whose Authority all Things in Heaven and Earth bow and obey; yet it teaches us at the same Time to adore Him as a gracious and merciful Being, full of Tenderness and Compassion towards His Creatures; as a Friend and Father, whose Care supplies our Wants; to whose Favour we owe every Comfort and Pleasure we can receive in this World, as well as all our Hopes of Happiness hereafter.

From that servile Dread, which is grounded in Errour, and leads to Superstition, we should be careful to distinguish the Terror and Confusion, which must naturally fill the Breast of a Sinner, when he first begins to reflect on the Danger of his State, and to consider the Penalties he has incurred from the Justice of the Almighty. For, if this leads him to sincere Repentance and Amendment, it cannot be unattended with a Degree of Confidence in the

Divine Goodness and Mercy; and some Portion of that filial Regard, which is the Life of true Religion. If the Sinner is disposed to consider the Almighty as an implacable inexorable Being, then, instead of any Endeavour to retrieve his sad Condition, Despair will follow in Course. But such a Fear of God, as is founded on those encouraging Descriptions of Him, which are contained in the holy Scriptures, will be the Beginning of the truest Wisdom; and will grow by Degrees into a filial Reverence, accompanied with high Esteem and grateful Love.

The more we contemplate the Divine Perfections, the more we shall be convinced of the Reasonableness of a steady Regard and Reverence towards God. Can we reflect on the perfect Knowledge and universal Presence of God, and not stand in Awe of such a Being: who is acquainted with all our Failings; who is about our Path, and about our Bed, and spieth out all our Ways; who observes and records every Word and every Action of our Lives; and from whom the most secret Thoughts and Inclinations of the Heart are not concealed? God is the Avenger of Falshood and Injustice of every Kind. He is the declared Enemy of

Pride. He abhorreth all Impurity. In short His Wrath is denounced against all Unrighteousness whatever. And can we be sensible of this, and yet feel no Concern for the Event of that Day, when we shall be called to His impartial Tribunal, and shall receive the Recompence of our Deeds, whether they have been good or evil?

None can resist the Power of God almighty. Nothing can interrupt the Execution of His Will. Our Happiness, and our Misery, are intirely in His Hands. *He has Power to save and to destroy.* If He be angry, He has innumerable Means of executing His just Vengeance. It is indeed (as the Apostle saith to the Hebrews) a terrible Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God: seeing that none can deliver us thence.

The Arguments arising from the Nature and Attributes of the Deity will more effectually impress our Minds with Reverence and Awe, if we reflect at the same Time with just Humility upon ourselves. We are indigent defenceless Beings, the Creatures of God's Power, and the Dependents of His Providence. Nevertheless, instead of acknowledging His sovereign Authority, and serving Him with a faith-

ful and true Heart, we have presumptuously transgressed His righteous Laws. We have despised His Goodness, and most ungratefully rebelled against Him. Then, if Prophets and Apostles, the favoured of God, fell down with Reverence at the Feet even of His Angels; if those holy and exalted Spirits, the Angels of God's Presence, veil their Faces before the Brightness of His unspeakable Glory; with what Awe and Veneration should we, sinful Dust and Ashes, approach that supreme Majesty, whom we have oft and grievously offended; and with what deep Humility present our Addresses at the Foot of His Throne!

There is nothing in the true Notion of God, that carries any Terrour in it, separate from Guilt;—nothing, but what is adapted to inspire Hope Confidence and Joy. He is an Object of Delight; and a Belief in His righteous Government is a Foundation of the greatest Courage. *In the Fear of the Lord* (saith Solomon) *is strong Confidence.* A just Apprehension of Him hath no Tendency to enfeeble and debase the Mind by filling it with constant Terrours and Alarms; but on the contrary to give it Strength and Firmness; and render it superiour

to the many Fears and Anxieties, which are wont to disturb us. It is Wickedness alone, which arms almighty Justice against us, and obliges us to consider Him as our most terrible Enemy, who is the Giver of all Good;—which makes Him become the Object of our Dread and Aversion, whom otherwise we should be disposed to love as our most endearing Friend and Benefactor, and should delight to address as our heavenly Father. The Man, who hath established in his Mind an habitual Regard towards the supreme Being; who is accustomed to set the Lord always before him, and “to consider Him, as He really is,” derives therefrom Serenity, Constancy, and invincible Courage. He is armed against all the Difficulties and Distresses of this Life. And he fears not the last Enemy, Death. For, as he truly fears God, he can fear nothing else.

We are taught in the holy Scripture, not only that an entire Submission is due to whatever the Almighty is pleased to command, but moreover that our Obedience ought to be accompanied with a willing Trust in His Goodness, and an Affection towards His Service. By the former we acknowledge Him as the

absolute Lord and Governor of the World; by the latter as "our Father in Heaven." This "filial Reverence" will ensure our Gratitude for the Goodness and Mercy we have already experienced; and will confirm our sincere and happy Trust in God, in Preference to every Allurement the World can offer. It will strengthen and uphold our Hearts against the Trial of severe Temptations; and prepare our Patience for the Day of Adversity. The Awe of God's supreme Majesty will keep us from Presumption; and the Remembrance of His infinite Goodness and Mercy will comfort and encourage us in every Trial. Whatever Afflictions we endure, they will appear to us as the salutary Correction of our best and kindest Friend. We shall no longer be in Danger either of Profaneness or Hypocrisy. We shall neither perform our Duty superficially nor grudgingly; but from the Heart, with Cheerfulness and Pleasure. We shall serve God with the same affectionate Zeal, as we comply with the Desires of the sincerest Friend or kindest Parent. The least of His Commands will appear venerable in our Eyes; and the most difficult will not seem grievous.

To conclude. — *Perfect Love* (as the Apostle saith) *casteth out Fear*. But who, in this imperfect State, can be supposed to love God in such a Manner, as never to stand in Need of the quickening Principle of *Fear*? If the Fear of God leads us to obey His righteous Laws, our own increasing Pleasure and Satisfaction will teach us more and more to serve Him from a Principle of sincere Love. The more we reflect on the everlasting Goodness of our heavenly Father, the more unreasonable, base, and ungrateful, it must seem “to disobey His holy Will.” But, when we have actually *tasted and seen* (as the Psalmist saith) *how gracious the Lord is*; when we come to know by our own Experience the elevating Joy, which is found in truly serving God; we shall feel so strong a Confirmation of “the Wisdom of that Choice, which we have made,” that we shall readily comprehend the Exhortation of the Apostle Paul, “to rejoice in the Lord always.” Still we must (as the Psalmist saith) *rejoice towards God with Reverence*. Whilst we approach God with that comfortable Hope and Confidence, which His paternal Character inspires, we still are bound to humble ourselves before Him, with that

Deference and Submission, which becometh Creatures, whom His Hand hath made; and with the Contrition of Sinners, who have many Times offended so great and so good a God.

Our imperfect Apprehension of the Deity, and the frequent Failings and Offences, to which even the best of Men are liable in the present State, must unavoidably debase the Honour we pay to God, with some Alloy. The full and intire Devotion of the Heart and Mind seems to be reserved for the Perfection of that State, where *we shall see God, as He is*, in the transcendent Beauty and Glory of His unchangeable everlasting Holiness and Goodness.

Let it be our earnest Care, in the mean Time, so to live in His Fear and Love, whilst on Earth, that we may behold Him without Terrour and Confusion hereafter: that, when we shall be called to the awful Tribunal of our Judge, we may, together with Millions of the happy righteous, receive that gracious Welcome from the Son of God: "*Come ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World.*"

(T. AMORY.)

1. TIMOTHY, vi. 6.

Godliness with Contentment is great Gain.

THE present Life is so full of Uncertainty, Disappointment and Afflictions, that it is in vain to attempt making ourselves happy by bringing our outward Circumstances to be in all Respects agreeable to our Wishes. But we have it in our Power to do that, which is far more important: namely, to conform our Minds to the Condition, which Providence allots us; to discharge faithfully the several Duties of our Station; enjoy with a grateful Heart the natural Comforts and Satisfaction of Life; and bear patiently those Afflictions, which God is pleased to send. This is that happy Temper of Mind, which St. Paul describes in his Epistle to the Philippians. *I have learned, in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Every where and in all Things I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer Need.* On the Cultivation of this excellent Disposition are depending in a great Measure our own present Satisfaction, the Peace of those, with whom we are connected, and our final Happiness.

All Discontent supposes Injury; or, at least, that Things might have been better ordained. But can we ever soberly think that the glorious God, who freely gave us our Being, and all the Means of Happiness, is capable of Injustice towards us? Is it possible for us to believe that the Course of Things could be better ordered, than it is by Him, in whom infallible Wisdom and almighty Power are united with perfect Goodness? He, who stedfastly believes, that; whether his Lot be prosperous or afflictive, it is appointed him by the wisest of Beings, and the kindest of Fathers, must surely be disposed to accept willingly every Dispensation of Providence, and to trust himself gladly to God's faithful Keeping.

It was this Consideration, that calmed the Mind of Job, and made him not only resigned, but thankful to God, amidst his accumulated Distresses. He regarded the Plunder of his Substance not merely as the Effect of the uncontrolled Violence of the Chaldeans; and the Storm, which killed his Children, not as proceeding from a blind natural Cause; but as Events directed by the wise and good Providence of God. Which led him to express the noblest Sentiments of Piety and Resignation: "*The Lord gave; and the Lord*

hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord.

In like Manner we ought always to remember that *Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust*, but is either a Trial or a Chastening appointed by the Lord, *from whom cometh every good and perfect Gift, and whose tender Mercies are over all His Works.* Whenever it may please God to try us with Pain or Sicknes or Misfortune, let us use no improper Means to relieve ourselves. Let us not rashly and blindly take ourselves out of the Hands of Providence; but dutifully wait *His good Time*, whose Truth and Kindness cannot fail. Let us *trust in the Lord and do that, which is Good*, and then we shall never want a Comforter.

In the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle declareth, that *God maketh all Things work together for Good to those, who love Him.* Amidst the various Afflictions and Distresses, to which Mankind are liable, we might have been tempted to believe that some other Situation or Circumstances would have been better and happier for us. But from hence we are assured, that, if we love God and keep His Commandments; if we make a right Use of the Understanding, which God hath given us; in

short, if we are humble enough to be directed in all our Ways by the righteous Precepts of our heavenly Father; He will give us the utmost Desire of our Hearts. For He will train us up to all the Happiness, of which our Nature is capable. He will bestow on us *the Blessing of His Peace in this Life*; and will crown us with everlasting Felicity in the Life hereafter.

These encouraging Truths, adapted as they are to produce a constant cheerful Contentedness in every Condition, ought to be always present to our Recollection. We cannot take too much Pains in impressing them upon our Minds.—Is it not a comfortable and joyful Thing to be assured “that nothing out of our own Power shall be able really to hurt us;”—that the worst-designed Actions of our Enemies shall only be the Instrument of Good to us; and that all Events shall be so conducted, as to promote and advance our true Happiness, so long as we put our Trust in the Lord? *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

The Treasures of this World, and all the outward Circumstances of Life, are very much out of our Power to command. Hence Discontent and Misery are seen to haunt the Bo-

ions of those Persons, who expect their chief Happiness from earthly Possessions. On the other Hand, the Pleasures and Satisfaction, that belong to Virtue, as they are the Fruits of our own right Temper and Conduct, are in the Power of every one. Wherefore, if we desire to be happy in all Conditions, let us *acquaint ourselves with God*: that our Peace may be established, and our Satisfaction may rest on a sure Foundation.

When once we have learnt to set a proper Value on *the Answer of a good Conscience towards God*, we shall see Things in so different a Light from what they formerly appeared in, that we shall *account all Things as Loss*, in Comparison with His Favour. Our Hearts being now raised above the Hopes and Fears of *this World*, we shall find no Difficulty in governing our Passions, and preserving Peace and Tranquillity in our own Breasts, in Despight of either the Smiles or the Frowns of Fortune. We shall possess the valuable Esteem and Friendship of virtuous Men. And, above all, we shall experience the ever increasing Delight of knowing that our Conduct is approved by our great Master and heavenly Father.

We are perpetually seeking for Happiness in such Ways, as can only lead to Disappointment. If we were but so prudent as to seek for it, where it really may be found, the very Beginning of our Pursuit would be an actual Beginning of our Enjoyment. For there is not any one Duty required of us, but what is productive of great Pleasure: besides the inward Peace and Satisfaction of a good Conscience towards God.

Every Portion of our Time, and every Talent, that we possess, are capable of such Improvement, as shall yield both present Delight and future Profit. Here is a rich Mine of Pleasure, which never can be exhausted;—a Treasure, of which nothing can deprive us;—a sure Ground of Satisfaction, Delight and Joy, which will abide with us, when every worldly Advantage must disappear and be no more.

Had we once fairly established these as our governing Principles, “that our main Business in Life is to approve ourselves to Him, who sent us into the World, and appointed us the Work, that we should do;—that our present Condition, as to Sicknes or Health, Want

"or Abundance, Reproach or Honour, is not
 "the important Concern; but our own *Temper*
 "and *Behaviour* in this State of Probation;
 "whereon are depending both our present
 "Comfort, and our *Happiness in the eternal*
 "*World;*" this would effectually remove all
 Discontent. Those Gratifications, which we
 are most apt to lament the Want of, would
 appear quite unimportant, and beneath our se-
 rious Regard. Our only earnest Care would
 then be to serve and please the Lord almighty
 by a faithful Discharge of the various Duties
 of our Station here: that He might reward us
 hereafter with Life eternal. In Respect of our
 outward Condition, and all Things relating to
 the present Life, we should (as the Apostle saith)
wEEP, as though we wept not, and rejoice, as though
we rejoiced not: because the Fashion of this World
passeth away. We should then willingly leave
 it to the wise Providence of God, to appoint for
 us what He sees to be the best. If we were en-
 trusted with Prosperity, we should not be dis-
 posed to rejoice in it, as an Opportunity of
 gratifying our sensual Appetites, or indulging
 any vicious Passion; but should consider our-
 selves as being strictly bound to make such Use
 of it, as might best promote the Honour of God

and the Good of Mankind. We should not be inclined to trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who is the Giver of all Things.

To conclude. — The oftener we contemplate on the awful Change, which all must undergo ere long, — the unspeakable Importance of the everlasting State, which probably is to many of us extremely near indeed; the less concerned and careful we shall be about the Treasures of this World. A very moderate share of Reflection seems sufficient to convince us, that a Christian Believer can not possibly have Reason to be discontented in any Condition whatever. For, what are the momentary Pains and Afflictions of this Life, when compared with the Glory, which shall be revealed hereafter? We ought to remember that God afflicts us not willingly, but for our necessary Improvement: that Patience may have its perfect Work, and may bring forth in us the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness. It is indisputably evident, that, whatever worldly Comforts or Pleasures we may be deprived of, we can have no Cause to murmur or complain, so long as we have in our Hands the Means of gaining an everlasting Treasure in the Kingdom of Heaven.

If we reverence God, and keep His Com-
 mandments, we have a sure Title to the Inhe-
 ritage of such Things, as Eye hath not seen,
 nor the Ear heard, nor the Heart of Man ever
 yet conceived:—from the Hope of which we may
 derive such Joy, as will overbalance the heaviest
 Afflictions, that can threaten us, as well as the
 most engaging Pleasures, that the World can
 offer.—God made us for the important Scenes
 of the World to come. The present Life is
 designed entirely as a State of Preparation for
 the next. Wherefore let us wisely resolve to
 comply with the Admonition of our Lord and
 Saviour Jesus Christ; whose constant Aim and
 Endeavour in all his teaching was “to raise our
 Views above the perishable Treasures of the
 Earth.” Set your Affections (saith he) on Things
 above, not on Things on the Earth. Lay not up
 for yourselves Treasures on the Earth, where Moth
 and Rust do corrupt, and where Thieves break
 through and steal; but lay up for yourselves Treas-
 ures in Heaven. Seek first that Righteousness,
 which is suitable to the Kingdom of God; and trust
 in Him for a due Supply of all your temporal
 Wants; for your heavenly Father knoweth how far
 ye stand in Need of these Things;—and He himself
 hath said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

EXTRACT

From a Sermon of Dr. Leland's on trusting in God.

WHEN we contemplate the unspeakable Glory of the Creator; when we consider the perfect Purity of His Nature; we cannot but be struck with an awful Reverence of such a Being: and might fear to approach Him, even with the Offerings most expressive of our Humility, if we had not been encouraged by the Knowledge of His condescending Kindness and Pity. But so great is His Goodness and Mercy towards us, that He hath promised to receive our humble Petitions for all necessary Help. He is ready to further every Beginning of Virtue and Holiness; and to assist with the blessed Influence of His Grace* our sincere Endeavours to observe His Laws, and to do His Will.

The righteous Lord loveth Righteousness. His Countenance beholdeth the upright. The great End of all His Dispensations towards us;—of the Laws, which He hath given us; and of His Covenant of Grace and Mercy; is that we may

* Luke xi. 13.

be Partakers of His Holiness. This is the Will of God, (saith St. Paul) even your Sanctification. Therefore what a good Man ardently aspires after, is to make a constant Progress in real Holiness of Heart and Life. And he looketh towards the heavenly State with peculiar Delight, because he shall there be free from all Defilement, and fixed for ever beyond the Reach of Temptation.

All created Beings are liable to change. The most perfect, if left to themselves, might fall from their Excellency. But God is unchangeable. He can never become less powerful wise or good. With Him is no Variableness, nor Shadow of turning. The Counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, (saith the Psalmist) and the Thoughts of His Heart unto all Generations. How solid a Foundation is this, whereon to build our Trust!—On Him alone may the Mind, convinced of the Instability and Uncertainty of all earthly Things, safely repose; and enjoy the truest Rest. Acquaint now thyself with God, (saith Job) and be at Peace.

How wonderful and awful is it to reflect, that the Almighty filleth Heaven and Earth, and

every Part of the stupendous Universe, with His Presence! *In Him all live, and move, and have their Being.* This Consideration, which strikes the Wicked with Terroure and Perplexity, affords the utmost Consolation and Joy to the upright. A good Man may be banished from his House, his Friends, and his Country; but he cannot be banished from his God. The utmost Power of his Enemies cannot deprive him of His gracious Communications. God, *who is the Strength of his Heart*, standeth by him in all Adversities; and will convert his Sufferings into an Occasion of triumphant Joy hereafter. He may rejoice therefore in the Midst of Tribulation. And, as he truly fears to offend God, he needeth not to fear any other Power.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, grant that we may in such-wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, by Patience, and Comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

EXTRACT

From a Sermon on Prayer.

IF those Benefits and Blessings only, which are of a temporal Nature, depended on a proper Exercise of the Duty of Prayer, surely it ought to be accounted a very valuable Privilege, to be permitted to apply for Health, and Strength, and Comfort, to Him, whose Power as far exceedeth the utmost Extent of all human Help, as His Goodness and loving Kindness exceed the scanty Benevolence of the Sons of Men. But, when we consider that spiritual Blessings also are promised to the sincere and humble Petitioner;—that the Almighty hath promised to give His holy Spirit to them, who ask it, (that they may be enabled both to know and do His holy Will) this adds such Importance to the Duty of Prayer, as plainly shows that we are our own worst Enemies, if we are so foolish and so presumptuous as to neglect it.

The diligent Use of Prayer naturally forms our Minds to a right Apprehension both of

God and ourselves. It sets before us the admirable Perfections of the Deity; and at the same Time shews us our happy Interest therein: It reminds us of His unspeakable Greatness and Goodness; His Compassion and tender Mercy. It awakens us to a proper Sense of our own Wants and Imperfections, and of the Wisdom and Kindness of God's providential Government. It teaches us to *set the Lord always before us*. It helps us to raise our Affections above the World: and is greatly instrumental in determining us to exert ourselves in earnest Endeavours to improve the Disposition of our Hearts, and conform our Thoughts and Actions more and more to the blessed Will of God. If we live in the wilful Neglect of this Duty; (though we know that God Himself hath commanded us to pray to Him)—if, whilst we cannot but be sensible that we stand continually in Need of His Protection and Support, we still resolve to live *as without God in the World*; such Presumption must certainly expose us to the Danger of being forsaken by our heavenly Father, and given up to a reprobate Mind and a hardened Heart. On the contrary, if we are steady and constant in the due Performance of Prayer and Thanksgiving

to our most gracious Benefactor, to Him who daily poureth His Benefits upon us; we shall find a Habit of sincere Devotion to be the most effectual Support of our Virtue in all Trials, and the most refreshing Rest and Comfort of our Souls in the toilsome Journey of Life. It will calm the Passions, regulate the Thoughts, and preserve the Heart and Affections from the chief Disturbances of human Life. It will afford us Safety in Prosperity and Patience in Adversity. It will supply us with both Strength and Courage in the worst of Dangers. It is a Sanctuary ever open to the unhappy. Tho' all other Friends forsake us, still God is near us. He is the ever-present Help in Trouble. Of His Friendship and Favour no Enemy can deprive us. No Power can intercept His gracious Communications. In His holy Comfort we may rejoice, and fear not: — Wherefore let us say (with the devout Psalmist) *May the Words of my Mouth and the Meditations of my Heart be always acceptable in thy Sight, O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer.*

MORNING PRAYERS.

O GOD, who hast prepared for them, that love thee, such good Things, as even surpass Man's Understanding, pour into our Hearts such Gratitude towards thee, that, loving thee above all Things, we may obtain thy heavenly Promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, grant that we may in such-wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience, and Comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

O GOD, the Creator and Preserver of all Mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all Sorts and Conditions of Men, that thou wouldst be pleased to make thy Ways known unto them, thy saving Health unto all Nations. More especially we pray for the good Estate of the catholic Church: that it may be so guided

and governed by thy good Spirit, that all, who profess and call themselves Christians, may be led into the Way of Truth, and hold the Faith in Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, and in Righteousness of Life. Finally, we commend to thy fatherly Goodness all those, who are any Ways afflicted or distressed in Mind Body or Estate: that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them, according to their several Necessities: giving them Patience under their Sufferings, and a happy Issue out of all their Afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus Christ's Sake. Amen.

ALmighty God, who alone canst order the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men, grant to us, we beseech thee, the Assistance of thy holy Spirit, that we may subdue all our corrupt Inclinations, and utterly abandon every evil Way. Give us Grace to purify our Hearts from all inordinate Desires; from sensual Passions; from Envy Hatred and Malice; from Falshood and Injustice; from Pride and Discontent. Preserve us from the Dangers of an indolent Mind; from the Waste of precious Time; from all Ingratitude, Selfishness and Inhumanity. Grant that all our

Thoughts and Designs, and the whole Tenour of our Conduct, may be more and more conformable to thy blessed Will: that we may honour and obey thee, O heavenly Father, as we ought to do; and may finally obtain thy glorious Rewards, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, give unto us the Increase of Faith Hope and Charity; and, that we may obtain thy heavenly Promises, make us to love all thy Commandments, for Jesus Christ's Sake our Lord. Amen.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them, that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

EVENING PRAYERS.

ALmighty God, give us Grace, that we may cast away the Works of Darkness, and walk by the blessed Light of the Gospel of thy Son: that, in the last Day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may be crowned with the joyful Sentence of Approbation, and be received into his everlasting Kingdom. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's Sake. Amen.

ALmighty everlasting God, mercifully look upon our Infirmities; and in all our Dangers and Necessities stretch forth thy Hand, to help and defend us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LORD of all Power and Might, who art the Author and Giver of all good Things, graft in our Hearts the Love of thy Name, increase in us true Religion; nourish us with all Goodness; and of thy great Mercy keep us in the same through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we
 most humbly adore thee as the Maker and
 Governor of the World, the Author of our Be-
 ing, the Preserver of our Lives, and the Giver
 of every good Thing. We bless thee for thy
 abundant Kindness and Mercy; for all the
 Comforts and Blessings we experience in the
 present Life; and much more for the glorious
 Prospect of immortal Happiness in the Life
 hereafter. Assist us with thy Grace, O Lord,
 that we may become daily more and more obe-
 dient to thy holy Will. Incline our Hearts to
 all good Ways. Grant that we may be strictly
 true and just in all our Dealings; humane,
 compassionate, and kind to all Creatures;
 faithful and diligent in the Discharge of all
 the Duties of that Condition, in which thou
 hast seen good to place us. Assist us in raising
 our Affections above the vain Treasures of the
 World. Give us true Wisdom: that we may
 be fully resigned to thy righteous Dispensati-
 ons, and by the Exercise of Patience and Hu-
 mility may prepare ourselves for that everlast-
 ing State of Happiness, for which we were cre-
 ated. Accept our Prayers, O merciful Fa-
 ther, for Jesus Christ's Sake. Amen.

ALmighty God, unto whom all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid, cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of thy holy Spirit: that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us each Day our daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them, that trespass against us. And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

A Prayer for Sunday Morning,

ALmighty God, our heavenly Father, to whose Honour this Day of holy Rest is dedicated, give us Grace; we beseech thee, so to observe and keep it, that it may be to us the Beginning of a happy Week spent in thy Service. Mercifully grant that our public Attendance in thy House of Prayer may be the Means of confirming ourselves in holy Purpo-

ses and virtuous Resolutions, as well as instrumental to the edifying of others: so that the Uprightness of our Conduct and Behaviour may prove the Sincerity of our Professions; and we may "shew forth thy Praise, not only "with our Lips, but in our Lives." Teach us to consider duly, that this World is not our proper Home. And kindly prompt us to make no Delay of preparing ourselves for the everlasting Life, which is to come. Assist us with thy Grace, O Lord, that we may so diligently apply ourselves to the Performance of every Duty, that, when we are Summoned to the great Day of Account, we may appear before our Judge without Difmay and Terror: that we may be acknowledged as the faithful Servants of Jesus Christ; and may be received into his glorious Kingdom, to live with him for ever. Amen.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, "by Patience and Comfort of thy holy Word," we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

AN ADMONITION.

WHEN we pray to the Almighty for His Blessing and Protection, for the Forgiveness of our Sins, and the merciful Guidance of His holy Spirit, it is indispensably requisite that our Manner and Deportment should be in all Respects expressive of the greatest Humility. If our private Devotions are performed with such Thoughtfulness and deep Attention, as are suitable to the high Importance and unspeakable Value of those Mercies and Blessings, for which we are encouraged to pray to our heavenly Father, we not only have the comfortable Hope that our Prayers will be accepted, but also experience an Impression upon our Minds, likely to produce a happy Influence on our Conduct. And, when we unite with our Fellow-Christians in the public Assembly, to praise God for His infinite Goodness, to acknowledge our Unworthiness of His most bountiful Kindness, and to pray for His merciful Guidance and Protection both for ourselves and for each other, do we not desire to promote a general

Spirit of Religion, and to be instrumental to our Neighbour's Edification? But, if we go through our private Devotions with almost the same Unfeelingness and Want of Thought, as if we were quite indifferent about the Event of our Prayers, we shall be more likely to offend the Almighty, than to obtain His Help and Favour. And, if the Manner of our public Worship be so defective, as to carry the Appearance rather of wilful Disrespect and Profaneness, than of any sincere Desire to honour God in the Sight of each other; then, instead of mutual Edification, it will be apt to produce a contrary Effect, and to encourage Levity and Irreverence, if not Contempt.

The humble Posture of *kneeling* is frequently noticed in Scripture, as a proper Token of Humility, when we pray to God. In private Prayer, and in Family Prayer, that becoming Posture is (I believe) very seldom neglected. But in the public Church, where the strictest Attention should certainly be paid to a reverent and truly humble Demeanour, it is the constant Practice of many Persons to offer up the most serious Acknowledgements of their Unworthiness of God-almighty's Favour, and the most earnest Petitions for His Mercy and

Forgiveness, in a Posture more expressive of
careless, Indolence or willful Indifference, than
of Reverece and Humiliation. There is so
much inconsistency and Presumption in this
Behaviour, as cannot but offend and distress
every thoughtful Christian. And the conscie-
entious must feel themselves in some Degree
obliged to show a serious Disapprobation.

By the same Editor.

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